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SUBJECT: GAZA SITUATION REPORT, JANUARY 8, 1500

Classified By: DCM Luis G. Moreno. Reason 1.4 (B/D)

11. (SBU) SUMMARY. Three Katyusha rockets fired from Lebanon struck northern Israel early on January 8 and lightly injured three civilians; Israeli forces responded with artillery fire. Military officials suspect Palestinian groups operating in Lebanon conducted the attack and sought to avoid escalation. Israeli forces announced a pause in fighting in the Gaza Strip on January 8 between 1300 and 1600 local to allow residents there to procure necessary provisions, but three rockets were fired on Ashkelon at approximately 1320, interrupting the pause. The Nahal Oz and Kerem Shalom crossings were set to open to facilitate humanitarian aid deliveries while Erez crossing is being used to evacuate dual nationals. Overnight the Israeli Air Force (IAF) struck over 60 targets and continued to target tunnels along the Philadelphi route. Elsewhere, military activities were lighter than they had been in previous days. Israeli media reported that 11 rockets struck Israel overnight, while 25 rockets had been fired at Israel the preceding day. One Israeli officer was killed in battle on January 8. Casualty estimates as of early January 8 were more than 700 Palestinians killed and more than 3,085 injured since December 27, along with at least 7 Israeli soldiers and 3 civilians killed. The latest toll from the UNRWA school in Jabaliya is 43 killed and about 100 injured. The UN reported that 75 percent of Gaza is without power. Hospitals have been without electricity since January 3 and fuel supplies that power generators could begin running out at some hospitals by January 10. ICRC plans to coordinate repair to damaged sewage pipes have not yet been approved by the IDF, and 800,000 people in north Gaza remain without water. According to the UN, many doctors and nurses are no longer able to report to work because it is "now almost impossible" to move from one part of Gaza to another, and 680,000 Gazans cannot access Shifa Hospital, the main referral hospital for special services and the central Ministry of Health warehouse for the entire territory. There had been 36-37 truckloads of combined UN/ICRC shipments planned for January 8, but the goods were halted after two employees of the contracting company on the Palestinian side were killed by IDF fire. Foreign Minister Livni and the new IDF humanitarian coordinator, Baruch Spiegel, plan to brief the diplomatic corps at 1700L. End Summary.

ROCKETS FIRED AT ISRAEL FROM LEBANON

12. (S//NF) USDAO and regional media reported that three Katyusha rockets fired from southwestern Lebanon struck northern Israel between 0700 and 0800 local time on January 8, lightly wounding three civilians. Israel Defense Forces (IDF) artillery units quickly returned fire in the direction of the rocket launches and IDF officials announced that they would deliver immediate and proportionate responses to any further attacks. The IDF initially ordered northern residents to open their bomb shelters, but later advised citizens to return to their normal routines. Lebanese media reported that Israeli jets were seen over southern Lebanon after the rocket attacks. Israeli media reported additional explosions in the north, but later explained that these

probably were sonic booms from Israeli jets. Israeli military sources assessed that the attack was carried out by a Palestinian organization in Lebanon based on the type of rocket used in the attack, according to Israeli press reports. The IDF has made contingency plans for potential escalation in the north, having raised its alert status in the region and called up reserve forces which would deploy to the border if hostilities broke out. UNIFIL forces in southern Lebanon also went on high alert following the exchange of fire.

ISRAELI MILITARY OPERATIONS

13. (U) The IDF announced early on January 8 that it would institute a pause in fighting between 1300 and 1600 local in order to allow Gaza Strip residents to stock up on essential provisions. Overnight the Israeli Air Force struck approximately 60 targets in the Gaza Strip, including a mosque purportedly used to store weapons, more than a dozen rocket launching areas, and 15 tunnels, according to an IDF press summary. One Israeli soldier was killed and another injured Thursday morning during combat near the Kissifum crossing. The IAF continued to bomb tunnels along the Philadelphia strip separating Gaza from Egypt, with Israeli aircraft dropping leaflets calling upon the 30,000 residents of neighborhoods close to the Egyptian border to leave their homes and return in the morning. Israeli security sources said that 100 tunnels along the Philadelphia corridor had been hit thus far, but that Israel had not yet targeted those tunnels that ran under residents' homes. Activities throughout the rest of the Gaza Strip were lighter on January 7 than they had been in previous days, partly due to the

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three-hour pause in fighting for humanitarian efforts, and also because many of Israel's goals for this stage of the operation have been met. Israeli media reported on January 8 that 11 rockets struck Israel overnight, while 25 rockets had been fired at Israel the preceding day.

CASUALTIES

14. (U) As of early January 8, casualty estimates stood at 700 Palestinians killed and more than 3,085 injured since December 27. According to the UN Office for Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), the latest toll from the UNRWA school in Jabaliya is 43 killed and about 100 injured. UNRWA has rejected IDF claims that the school was being used to fire mortars at Israeli forces. Seven Israeli soldiers have been killed during operations, along with three Israeli civilians.

HUMANITARIAN SITUATION

15. (SBU) There were 36-37 truckloads of combined UN/ICRC shipments planned for January 8, but the plan was scrapped at mid-day because IDF tank fire killed two Palestinian aid transporter at Erez. Uri Singer from the Coordination of Government Activity in the Territories office, said that the company employing the two workers who were killed is refusing to transport any more shipments. UNRWA on January 7 provided 4,000 liters of diesel to the Patient Friends Benevolent Hospital and 75,000 liters of diesel to the Coastal Municipal Water Authority. It also facilitated the movement of 3 tankers with 142,000 liters of industrial diesel from Kerem Shalom to the Gaza Power Plant, but as of 1000 local on January 8 the power plant had not restarted its turbines, according to UNRWA contact in Gaza. Nahal Oz was open on the 8th, and the transfer of 500,000 liters of fuel for the power plant was scheduled. Israeli officials also announced that 765 people, including 300 dual nationals, would be evacuated via the Erez terminal on January 8. As of early afternoon on the 8th, however, only 200 people came to the Erez terminal and had made the crossing.

16. (SBU) The UN reported that 75 percent of Gaza is without power. Hospitals have been without electricity since January

3, and remain on backup generators. UNOCHA reported that fuel supplies will begin running out at some hospitals by January 10. USAID Gaza staff and the UN report that many families are without cooking gas. The UNRWA Gaza field office reported that it is facing tremendous difficulty in communicating with UNRWA field staff, as cellular phones are largely inoperable and batteries in handheld radios cannot be recharged because there is no electricity.

¶7. (U) ICRC plans to coordinate repair to damaged sewage pipes have not yet been approved by the IDF. The Coastal Municipality Water Utility reported that 800,000 people in north Gaza, Gaza City and central Gaza have been without running water since January 6. In Jabaliya camp, the largest camp with roughly 110,000 refugees, the food distribution site was heavily damaged in an IAF strike. As a result, the over 80,000 food beneficiaries in the camp have not received food distributions since before December 18.

¶8. (SBU) According to UNOCHA, many doctors and nurses are no longer able to report to work because it is "now almost impossible" to move from one part of Gaza to another. ICRC attempts to coordinate safe bus passage for hospital staffs on January 5 were unsuccessful. UNOCHA reported that IDF actions in Gaza City are preventing 680,000 Gazans from the central Gaza, Khan Yunis and Rafah from accessing Shifa Hospital, the main referral hospital for special services and the central Ministry of Health warehouse for the entire territory.

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